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The variety of influences on the teaching of literature at the elementary school level is illustrated by this description of current practices and review of research and development in the area. The following types of materials are reviewed to point out recommended practices: curriculum guides, objectives of library programs, textbooks for children, textbooks for teacher education, standards for teacher preparation, and opinions of specialists. The review of research includes studies and reports dealing with (1) status of research in teaching literature in the elementary school, (2) children's interests and tastes, (3) content analysis of children's literature, (4) preparation of teachers for teaching literature, (5) curriculum development in literature in the elementary school, (6) practices in teaching literature, and (7) children's responses to literature. The conclusion states that the best focus for research and development is on the reading children do and on the responses children make to the literature they read. (LH)

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TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Norine Odland

TE 001 471

NCTE ERIC

A CLEARINGHOUSE ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
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Leo, the fifth sign of the Zodiac, is known as the Lion. Leo is the sign of children and young people, and rules the sphere of creative arts. It is said that those born under this sign have vivid imaginations and a keen interest in literature, especially fiction.

NCTE/ERIC Studies in the Teaching of English

TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.

– Samuel Johnson

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TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

The Bureau of Research of the United States Office of Education has in recent years considerably expanded its support to basic and applied research in education. It has also made possible and encouraged the dissemination of findings and conclusions. As the body of information derived from research has expanded, however, so has the gap between research and classroom teaching. Recognizing this problem, the Bureau of Research has charged ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) to go beyond its initial function of gathering, evaluating, indexing, and disseminating information to a significant new service: information analysis and synthesis.

The ERIC system has already made available – through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service – much informative data, including all Bureau of Research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, the Bureau of Research has now directed the separate ERIC Clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities state-of-the-art papers in specific areas.

Each state-of-the-art paper focuses on a concrete educational need. The paper attempts a comprehensive treatment and qualitative assessment of the published and unpublished material on the topic. The author reviews relevant research, curriculum trends, teaching materials, the judgments of recognized experts in the field, reports and findings from various national committees and commissions. In his analysis he tries to answer the question "Where are we?" sometimes finds order in apparently disparate approaches, often points in new directions. The knowledge contained in a state-of-the-art paper is a necessary foundation for reviewing existing curricula and planning new beginnings.

NCTE/ERIC, with direction and major substantive assistance from its Advisory Committee, has identified a number of timely and important problem areas in the teaching of English and has commissioned state-of-the-art papers from knowledgeable members of the profession. It is hoped that this series of papers, each subject to review by the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Publications, will provide a place to stand. The next step is the lever.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, NCTE/ERIC

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is usually considered an essential part of the elementary school curriculum. But, beyond the general acceptance of literature in the curriculum of the elementary school, there is evidence of vast differences concerning implementation in terms of content, objectives, methods and approaches, and evaluation procedures. A description of the state of the art of teaching literature in the elementary school must recognize variety both in theory and in practice.

Variance begins in the terminology used to denote some kind of attention to literature during elementary school curriculum planning. The expression "teaching literature" is used relatively infrequently and usually is associated with a special period of the day with a special label in the same way teachers refer to teaching science in the science period or to teaching any other subject in the time designated for it. The broader, more general interpretations of literature in the elementary school expand into use of terms such as language, language arts, personal reading, reading, individualized reading, interests and tastes, reading guidance, literature readers, appreciation, and variations of each of these. Direct attention to literature is most often indicated in either reading or language arts areas of the curriculum, but examination of other curricular areas reveals that the reference to and use of literature is recognized in every area of the elementary school curriculum if reading and studying books other than textbooks may be interpreted as literature.

Using this broad and general interpretation of literature as including all literature that occurs in any subject area of the elementary school, to gain any impression of what this includes or what is supposedly happening in the classroom one must examine the areas which propose to influence the teaching of literature in the elementary classroom. Within the limits of this paper, it is impossible to consider an examination and evaluation of all factors contributing to current practices. An attempt has been made to illustrate the range and variety of influences affecting the teaching of literature by reviewing the following:

Curriculum guides
Objectives of library programs
Textbooks for children
Textbooks for teacher education
Standards for teacher preparation
Opinions of specialists

Following the description of current practices, contributions to development in the teaching of literature in the elementary school have been reviewed. *Research* is interpreted to be study leading to new knowledge about the teaching of literature in the elementary school, and by *development* is meant the application of knowledge to programs and practices in teaching literature in the elementary school. Again, limits of the paper preclude anything but reviews to illustrate significant contributions to research and as such cannot be considered a comprehensive survey of research. The review of research includes studies and reports dealing with:

Status of research in teaching literature in the elementary school
Children's interests and tastes
Content analysis of children's literature
Preparation of teachers for teaching literature
Curriculum development in literature in the elementary school
Practices in teaching literature
Children's responses to literature

Under both "Current Practices" and "Research and Development," the reviews have been grouped separately so that sources can be identified easily. Following each of the two major sections is a summary and, combined with the summary, implications for continued and further study about the teaching of literature in the elementary school. In the last section of the paper, the writer has attempted to make conclusions and recommendations about the state of the art of teaching literature in the elementary school.

Three questions have guided the entire presentation: What are current practices in teaching literature in the elementary school? What evidence has been accumulated to support the practices? What study should be pursued in order to increase our knowledge about teaching literature in the elementary school?

CHAPTER ONE

CURRENT PRACTICES

REVIEWS OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

Curriculum Guides

Reasons for teaching literature in the elementary school are stated in the guide prepared for use by the teachers of the Livonia, Michigan, public schools. Because teaching children to read does not necessarily develop the desire to read, literature must be taught so that children will want to read for their own pleasure. The guide emphasizes the idea that the teacher is the most important factor in the success of a literature program. The school librarian can make important contributions but cannot and should not be expected to assume the responsibility for teaching *literature.* The guide states clearly and directly that this responsibility should be assumed by the classroom teacher. The school principal is considered to be responsible for stimulating interest in the literature program and for assisting with a framework within which the program will operate. The issue of a time and place for literature in the curriculum is also treated directly by the guide. Suggestions are made for charting class time so that there will be a time for literature activities each day. Suggestions for time and place are combined with selecting and organizing the content of the program. For kindergarten through grade two the times for literature are scheduled. For grades three to six the only scheduled time is for the teacher to read and introduce books to the class. Time for independent reading is not scheduled. Other times suggested for literature are combined with reading or language arts. Texts are used for reading and language, and the literature selections are to be taken fro n the texts. Evaluation procedures are suggested and include interest inventories, reading records, and informal

methods. The major portion of the guide is devoted to information about children's literature. Award lists and lists of books for room collections of literary materials are a part of the guide.[1]

The Montgomery County Public Schools guide for the literature program includes kindergarten through grade twelve. Illustrative units are included for each grade through the sixth. Detailed questions for the teacher to ask about literary selections are included in the units. In addition to the illustrative units, a vertical unit scheme is outlined for guiding the teaching of literature in the elementary school.[2]

The curriculum guide for the language arts in the Chicago Public Schools deals with literature as a part of the reading program. The objective is to develop appreciation for literature, and procedures are suggested for achieving the objective. Bibliographies of children's books are included in the guide.[3]

The Pasadena City Schools have prepared a guide for enriching the study of literature. The purposes and guidelines are stated in terms of teaching literature to gifted children. Literature selections are included, and with each selection specific detailed questions are given for the teacher to ask about the selection.[4]

The literature guide for grade six in the Wichita Public Schools is introduced with an overview of the program including the objectives which teaching literature is intended to accomplish. Twenty prose selections are listed alphabetically with the suggestion that the teacher should decide about the sequence in which the selections will be taught. Suggestions for teaching are included with the prose as well as with the twenty poetry selections which are included in the guide. The program recognizes the interests of the students who will read the prose and the poetry.[5]

[1] Livonia Public Schools, "Guide to the Teaching of Children's Literature for the Elementary Classroom Teachers (Experimental Edition)" (Livonia, Mich., 1966).

[2] Montgomery County Public Schools, "Curriculum Guide, English Language Arts, Literature Program K-12," Bulletin No. 185, Part I (Rockville, Md., 1965).

[3] Chicago Public Schools, "Curriculum Guide for the Language Arts" (Chicago: Board of Education, 1963).

[4] Pasadena City Schools, "Children's Literature: A Resource Guide for Enriching the Study of Literature" (Pasadena, Calif., 1964).

[5] Wichita Public Schools, "Literature Guide, Grade Six" (Wichita: Curriculum Division, Board of Education, 1965).

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Objectives of Library Programs

Standards for School Library Programs includes recommendations relevant to literature programs in the elementary school. The purposes stated for the school library are to:

1. Participate effectively in the school program as it strives to meet the needs of pupils, teachers, parents, and other community members.
2. Provide boys and girls with the library materials and services most appropriate and most meaningful in their growth and development as individuals.
3. Stimulate and guide pupils in all phases of their reading so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction and may grow in critical judgment and appreciation.
4. Provide an opportunity through library experiences for boys and girls to develop helpful interests, to make satisfactory personal adjustments, and to acquire desirable social attitudes.
5. Help children and young people to become skillful and discriminating users of libraries and of printed and audio-visual materials.
6. Introduce pupils to community libraries as early as possible and cooperate with those libraries in their efforts to encourage continuing education and cultural growth.
7. Work with teachers in the selection and use of all types of library materials which contribute to the teaching program.
8. Participate with teachers and administrators in programs for continuing professional and cultural growth of the school staff.
9. Cooperate with other librarians and community leaders in planning and developing an overall library program for the community or area.[6]

In the discussion of objectives, special explanations are made concerning audiovisual materials. The 1968 revision of *Standards for School Library Programs,* entitled *Standards for School Media Programs,* makes even more extensive recommendations concerning the audiovisual program.

The "general principles governing teacher-library relationships" are listed:

1. The teacher makes the library meaningful and useful to his students through his knowledge of the library's program and resources . . . .

[6]American Library Association, Committee on Post-War Planning, *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1945), pp. 9-10, quoted in American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for School Library Programs.* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1960), pp. 8-9. Used by permission.

2. The teacher motivates his students to make extensive use of library resources for classroom work and for purposes not connected with class assignments.
3. The teacher participates in the formulation of school library policies by serving on or communicating with the faculty library committee.
4. The teacher utilizes every opportunity to help the library in his school reach standards of excellence.
5. The teacher participates in the selection of materials for the school library and in the evaluation of the library's collection in his specialized field. . . .
6. The librarian provides teachers with many services related to materials that are helpful to them in connection with their teaching programs. . . .
7. Using research skills successfully, satisfying curiosities through fact-finding, developing an interest in and liking for independent reading, and finding enjoyment in books, recordings, and other materials are important elements in the education of children and young people. Making certain that students have these experiences is the responsibility of every faculty member, including the library staff. . . .
8. The teacher brings his class groups to the library, sends small groups or individuals from the classroom to the library or its conference rooms to read, to learn library skills, or to do reference or research work, and makes collections of materials from the school library available in his classroom. . . .
9. The teacher keeps the school librarian informed about curricular changes and gives advance information about class assignments, so that resources are available in the library. . . .
10. The teacher becomes familiar with other libraries in the community. . . .[7]

Discussing new roles for school libraries, McClellan outlines the library skills which are usually taught by the librarian. He suggests that interest in books does not come magically and recognizes that teachers must introduce books, excite imaginations, and give life to characters in books.[8]

Coburn cites the changing role of the school librarian and questions the proper function of the school librarian in the

[7]American Association of School Librarians. *Standards for School Library Programs.* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1960), pp. 65-67. Used by permission.

[8]Jack McClellan, "New Roles for School Libraries," *Elementary English,* 42 (October 1965), 646-650.

elementary school. He refers mainly to library skills and to ways of creating approaches for bringing the library's potential to all children.[9]

Ten school library systems in eight states were selected by Lowrie to be studied as situations demonstrating good elementary school library practice. The first phase of the study was curriculum enrichment in grades four, five, and six. The second phase studied was reading guidance; no statement of grade designation was made for the reading guidance emphasis. The responsibility of the librarian was considered to be "providing books which will expand the reading interest and vocabularies of the students and will guide them into the delights of reading for enjoyment as well as for information, and to stimulate interest through book talks, story hours and other devices."[10] The classroom teacher who knows the reading abilities of the students can thereby guide their reading. Librarians expressed a need for teachers to know more about children's literature. The librarian is expected to make materials available, but the teacher is more responsible for building appreciation for good books.

Textbooks for Children

Textbooks intended for use by children in the elementary school frequently specify objectives related to literature. In one reader (second level of second grade), *People on Parade,* the major emphasis is on reading skill development. The term "self-selection" is used, and "literary appreciation" is listed as a possibility under the heading "Additional Activities." Related reading is suggested at the end of each unit as an approach to literary appreciation. An explanation in the teacher's edition refers to the series of language arts texts recommended for the part of the program which emphasizes and develops writing, spelling, and speaking skills, as well as literary appreciation.[11]

[9]Louis Coburn, "The Educational Challenges of Librarianship," *Elementary English,* 43 (April 1966), 398-399.

[10]Jean Elizabeth Lowrie, *Elementary School Libraries* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1961), p. 58.

[11]Russell G. Stauffer, Alvina T. Burrows, and Mary E. Colman, *People on Parade* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

For another basic text in reading, *Basic Reading* 3^1, the teacher's guide points out that the stories and poems in the text are especially rich in literary value. Direction is given for those teachers who wish to integrate literature with other language arts by using activities involving composition, grammar, phonics, punctuation, and sentence structure. Page-by-page instructions are given for the teacher to use to guide the children's reading of the stories.[12]

In *From Faraway Places,* the basic reading program is presented in four parts: Developmental Strand, Subject Matter Strand, Individualized Strand, and Literary Strand. The books for the Literary Strand are to be used in grades one through six; there, the major emphasis is on contemporary rather than classical selections, although the guide suggests that classical selections be included. In the Developmental Strand, objectives are directed toward recognizing words and acquiring linguistic skills. In the teacher's guide for the Developmental Strand, a description of the other parts of the series is given and objectives for the literary readers are listed.[13]

The four phases of reading outlined as components of basic reading in the teacher's edition for *Finding New Neighbors* are Developmental Program, Recreational Program, Functional Program, and Enrichment Program. Most of the reading lessons include objectives related to the four phases of the reading program, but the emphasis varies from one lesson to another. Reading interests are considered to be important in the teaching process. Objectives for the third grade program are listed under three headings: Skills, Good Reading Habits, and Attitudes and Appreciations. The text material consists of both prose and poetry.[14]

In the sixth grade book from the Macmillan English series, two of the fifteen units have some relevance to the topic of teaching literature. One unit deals with poetry and choral speaking. Poems are presented, and children are expected to study their characteristics. One unit is organized around use of

[12] Glenn McCracken and Charles C. Walcutt, *Basic Reading* 3^1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1964).

[13] Mabel O'Donnell, *From Faraway Places* (Evanston, Ill.: Harper and Row, 1966).

[14] David H. Russell, Gretchen Wulfing, and Odille Ousley, *Finding New Neighbors* (Boston: Ginn, 1964).

the library and reading library books. Library skills are introduced. Types of books are studied, book lists are suggested, and some instruction is directed toward giving book reports.[15]

Instruction in the Roberts English Series, third level, is aimed toward improving children's command of English by teaching the main features of the writing system. Each part of each section is introduced with a passage from literature to be read and studied. Poetry predominates but prose is included. The selections are considered to be good literature, so chosen because they are to be studied word by word. The purpose of the literary selections is to teach the child to read more accurately and more sensitively. The objective for teaching is to make the child able to discover consistently and accurately what is on the printed page.[16]

One text, *Let's Talk,* second level, is divided into six units. One of the units is "Making Stories and Enjoying Poems." The sound of words is emphasized, and students are expected to answer questions about words in the poems the teacher reads aloud. Another unit is "Telling Others about Books." In that unit the teacher is expected to read stories to the children. Listening is followed by discussion, and instruction is focused on reviewing the book or story. Standards are established for telling about books. The teacher's guide refers to the need for developing an interest in books as a part of teaching reading or children's literature.[17]

Study of the English language is the objective of *Elementary School English,* third level. Seven specific objectives are stated in terms of what students are expected to do upon completion of the text. The seventh objective is to "identify sense words and comparisons. Identify rhyming words in poetry. In fiction, recall major characters, summarize basic plot developments, and state some reasons for the actions of major characters." The teacher's edition includes a bibliography of recommended

[15] Thomas Clark Pollock, Evelyn D. Duncan, and Robert J. Geist, *Macmillan Textbook Series,* Grade 6 (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

[16] Paul Roberts, *A Linguistic Program,* Teacher's edition, Level 3 in Roberts English Series (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966).

[17] Paul McKee and M. Lucille Harrison, *Let's Talk,* Level 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

children's books. The last unit in the text is "Poems, Stories and Plays." The systematic study of each selection for specific purposes is recommended.[18]

Textbooks for Teacher Education

Witty, Freeland, and Grotberg have written a text for teachers and students preparing to be teachers. Attention is given to both interests (Chapter 3) and literature (Chapter 7). Findings of studies about interests are reviewed, and interests are related to the development of reading skills. Among the conclusions and implications of the studies conducted by Witty and others are several which relate to literature programs. Findings show that, compared with television, reading has relatively little appeal, except perhaps for gifted children. Compared with other activities, little time is spent on books outside the school. A determined effort needs to be made to improve the status of reading among children and youth today. In treating the topic of literature for children and young people, the authors contend that a major responsibility of the school is to provide situations that will maintain or engender favorable attitudes toward reading. They present ideas about content of the literature program and recommend including folk and fairy tales, animal stories, American folklore, modern fanciful tales, realistic literature, regional stories of the United States, biographies, historical fiction, stories from other lands, and poetry. The authors consider uniformity in the literature program neither desirable nor practical. Goals for the literature program should be planned, and the quality and suitability of children's books should be evaluated as well as more immediate goals.[19]

Tiedt and Tiedt report literature has always been an integral part of the English program in the junior high school, high school, and college, but in the elementary school literature is incidental. This condition calls for a planned program in literature. Suggestions are made for activities including better book reviewing, presenting a book to a class, and focusing attention on books. Literature is considered not only a part of

[18] Artha Sue Loy and Mary A. Grimm, *Elementary School English,* Level 3 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968).

[19] Paul A. Witty, Alma Moore Freeland, and Edith Grotberg, *The Teaching of Reading* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1966).

the English program but also a means for enriching learning in other subjects.[20]

In a chapter called "Guiding Growth in Independent Reading," Dallman discusses the value of books. Reading levels and reading interests are considered. Suggestions for Book Week activities are given along with illustrative lessons in which books are to be read as enrichment for other subjects. Evaluation of independent reading in terms of how much the children read as well as what they read is recommended.[21]

In a book directed to the teacher of language arts by Dawson and others, one chapter deals with "Literature as Part of the Language Program." Relationships between language learning and literature are considered. Interests and tastes are discussed. Poetry and choral reading are presented. "Appreciation is caught, not taught" is the theme basic to the text dealing with literature.[22]

The subject of literature in the elementary school is discussed by Anderson in the chapter "Rediscovering Children's Literature." The author makes suggestions to teachers about resources available, bibliotherapy, reading aloud to children, difficulty of children's books, involving parents in literature programs, effective book reports, storytelling, poetry in the curriculum, and verse choirs.[23]

Leland Jacobs contributed the chapter "Children's Experiences in Literature" in the book *Children and the Language Arts.* The importance of literature in the elementary school is stressed. Characteristics of literature for young children and for older children are outlined and explained. Both poetry and prose are related to children's experiences with literature.[24]

[20] Iris M. Tiedt and Sidney W. Tiedt, *Contemporary English in the Elementary School* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

[21] Martha Dallman, *Teaching the Language Arts in the Elementary School* (Dubuque: William C. Brown, 1966).

[22] Mildred A. Dawson, Marion Zollinger, and Ardell Elwell, *Guiding Language Learning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 105.

[23] Paul S. Anderson, *Language Skills in Elementary Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

[24] Virgil E. Herrick and Leland B. Jacobs (eds.), *Children and the Language Arts* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955).

Recommendations are made by Dawson and Bamman in relation to children's interests and tastes in reading. School time should be regularly available for individual free reading. There should be direct instruction in skills of reading and much recreational reading. The teacher's own enthusiasm for reading good books is considered a factor in awakening enthusiasm in children.[25]

The sixty-seventh yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (1968) deals with literature to a limited extent. In a chapter on the training of reading teachers, Austin reviews recent studies of elementary school reading programs. Among the findings reported is the conclusion that teachers are not providing broad individual reading experiences for students. Chapter 9, "Balanced Reading Development," discusses what the discipline of literature contributes to the reading program. Some educators think of a balanced program as part reading instruction and part literature reading. To others literature may be the heart of the reading program. Still others use anthologies as supplementary reading or as a source of stories for special occasions. The reading of trade books is one of the goals of the program; the child who does not choose to read for personal purposes has failed to achieve a major objective of the total reading program.[26]

Tinker and McCullough list, among the goals of reading instruction, broader interests and better taste. In their consideration of factors related to goals of reading instruction, the authors make a strong case for the reading teacher to be a reader if he is to succeed in his teaching. He also needs to be familiar with the elements which make books worthwhile. In the chapter dealing with interests and tastes, the authors stress the importance of getting children to read widely with enjoyment. Direct instruction with stories in readers is the beginning, but more reading is necessary.[27]

[25] Mildred A. Dawson and Henry A. Bamman, *Fundamentals of Basic Reading Instruction*, 2nd ed. (New York: David McKay, 1963).

[26] National Society for the Study of Education, *Innovation and Change in Reading Instruction*, Sixty-seventh Yearbook, ed. Helen M. Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[27] Miles A. Tinker and Constance M. McCullough, *Teaching Elementary Reading* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968).

A book by Whitehead begins with a chapter titled "A Planned Program in Literature" and in six other chapters deals with several ways in which literature may be included in the elementary school program. In each chapter, a short introductory perspective is followed by detailed suggestions for using literature with children. Bibliographies are given, and titles are suggested for the activities outlined.[28]

The introduction to a book about children's books by Arbuthnot indicates that the author expects it to be used for children's literature courses in English, education, and library science departments. Major attention is directed toward the books children read; very little is given to teaching literature in the elementary school. Suggestions are made for presenting books to children. In the sections dealing with poetry, methods and approaches are considered as they influence selection of materials. Extensive and specialized lists of recommended books appear in the text.[29]

In a book by Huck and Kuhn, Parts I and II are written to help the teacher and the school librarian become familiar with literature available to children, to help them develop criteria for evaluating books and create in children a love of good books. Part III is designed to help teachers become more skillful in guiding children's study of literature and develop a sound literature program in the elementary school. The topic "Developing a Literature Program" is presented under three chapter headings:

Creating the Learning Environment
Stimulating Creative Activities through Literature
Teaching Literature in the Elementary School

The authors advocate a planned literature program as part of an integrated language arts curriculum. Purposes of the literature program include the following:

Experiencing Literature
Developing Taste

[28]Robert Whitehead, *Children's Literature: Strategies of Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955).

[29]May Hill Arbuthnot, *Children and Books,* 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1964).

Developing Knowledge
- Literary Classics
- Authors and Illustrators
- History of Children's Literature
- Types of Literature
- Standards for Evaluation
- Methods of Studying Literature

Developing Skills of Literary Criticism
Fostering Language Skills
Enriching Content of Curriculum
Stimulating Creative Activities
Memorizing Worthwhile Selections
Developing Appreciation

The nine purposes, outlined and explained in the text, provide the guidelines for the development of a literature curriculum in the elementary school. A taxonomy of literary understandings and skills is presented, stated in terms of pupil behaviors:

Understands types of literature
Understands components of fiction
Understands components of poetry
Evaluates literature
Applies knowledge of literary criticism

Recommendations are made for planning and evaluating the literature programs in terms of pupil behavior.[30]

Standards for Teacher Preparation

The academic and professional preparation of teachers of English in the elementary school is part of a volume prepared by the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English. The language arts program is outlined to encompass the teaching of reading, literature, composition, and speech and listening. Because the teacher must respond to literature if he is to develop appreciation in the students he teaches, study of literature is recommended in his academic preparation. The study of literature, including literature for children, is considered an important part of the education of the elementary teacher. The Commission recommends a course in children's literature in its discussion of both

[30] Charlotte S. Huck and Doris Y. Kuhn, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School,* 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

academic and professional preparation of the elementary school teacher. The authors of the volume conclude that many children have little contact with literature; the main reason seems to be that too little time is spent with literature in the elementary school.[31]

Opinions of Specialists

Not only are literature and reading viewed as separate entities in the elementary school, they are also given unequal emphasis. This opinion is expressed by Jenkins as he points out that reading and literature have common purposes, symbols, and structures, and they involve common thinking processes. He deplores the fact that reading and literature are still separated in far too many classrooms. Among the vital reading skills "that must be entertained when teaching literature in the elementary school" are those through which the child is taught

> to interpret life in varying degrees of seriousness
> [to recognize the] nuances, subtleties, and intricacies [of language]
> to interpret a wide range of vocabulary and discourse, even in dialect
> to pursue a series of events in order of time
> [to comprehend] both the main idea and pertinent details
> to grasp the tone and mood of a reading selection
> to use pictorial aids to meaning
> to make generalizations from specific instances he encounters in reading
> to recognize and understand the figures and other esthetic elements he encounters in his reading
> [to develop] vocabulary.[32]

A prediction of directions for literature programs in the elementary school was made by Squire in a paper dealing with language learning. He described literature study as moving toward greater attention to the literary work itself and to its formal or structural qualities. The concern for structure was interpreted to imply a greater and more controlled attention, at

[31] Commission on the English Curriculum, *The Education of Teachers of English*, Vol. V of NCTE Curriculum Series, ed. Alfred H. Grommon (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963).

[32] William A. Jenkins, "Reading Skills in Teaching Literature in the Elementary School," *Elementary English*, 41 (November 1964), 781-782, *passim.*

both the elementary and secondary levels, to the analysis of a smaller number of selected texts. The structured program would be supported by a strong guided program of wide individual reading.[33]

The area of elementary language arts need not include literature as the secondary "English" area does, according to Loban. He observes that "the inclusion of literature in elementary education has been at best irregular." Some elementary teachers resist any organized system in their teaching of literature "because they believe the result would be a *study* of literature, something more likely to diminish enjoyment than to enhance it," a condition they believe is often the fate of literature in the secondary school. Loban develops the view that literature should be part of the elementary curriculum, since it can be treated in such a way as to point up its value instead of turning children against it. He proposes a balanced literature program which includes different material relevant to the child's world and growth and which uses the "full range of artistry children may encounter in literature – form, irony, symbolism, and all the language of metaphor on which literature depends." He contends that it is possible to include content and artistry "without formal study or examination" and that "intellectual instruction in literary form does not belong in the elementary school." Specific suggestions are made for balancing the content and the artistic element, the parts of the program which must be considered in planning a literature curriculum for the elementary school. Various approaches for balancing content are reviewed with no one approach recommended over others. Exposure to the artistic elements is necessary, although children ought not to study them formally. Loban considers the goals of teaching literature much too important to be approached in any way but with a sequential and balanced program in elementary and secondary schools.[34]

[33] James R. Squire, "New Directions in Language Learning," *Elementary English*, 39 (October 1962), 535-544.

[34] Walter Loban, "Balancing the Literature Program," *Elementary English*, 43 (November 1966), 746-751.

"What Is the Role of Children's Literature in the Elementary School?" was the first of a series of articles published under the title "Children's Literature – Old and New." The series was compiled by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English under the chairmanship of Virginia Reid, who explained in an introduction to the series that the committee, when polled on the purposes and proposed contents of the publication, agreed on the basic theme:

> A balanced program in literature for children in elementary grades;
> A balance between literature concerns and education concerns . . . ;
> A balance between teacher-initiated activities and pupil-initiated activities;
> A balance among the types of literature . . . ;
> A balance of experiences with literature: reading, listening, speaking, and writing;
> A balance between traditional and modern selections.[35]

The chairman also reported agreement that literature readers of which a great many copies have been produced should be given some consideration, as well as the teacher in a self-contained classroom who is faced with the problems of teaching "so much to so many." Reports from classroom teachers suggest that including literature in a crowded curriculum is a problem.

Walker outlined the ways in which literature contributes to the goals of elementary education through meeting the needs of individual pupils, providing learning programs to utilize natural interests, and developing wider social understandings, power of self-insight, and understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage, as well as stimulating and fostering creative expression. The contrast is made between those elementary school classes in which literature is used only in connection with other subjects and those classrooms in which children derive the benefits from a "well-planned, thoughtfully organized body of literature experiences." Walker recommended that faculties and committees organize their curriculums to guarantee regular literature experiences which

> grow in maturity of vocabulary and concept as the child reaches new levels of development

[35] Virginia M. Reid, "Guest Editorial," in "Children's Literature – Old and New," *Elementary English,* 41 (May 1964), 456.

provide for a good balance in subject matter –
literature of the past and of modern times
literature that is realistic and that which is imaginative
literature that is fictional and that which is factual
literature that is prose and that which is poetry
meet high standards of the writers', the illustrators', and the publishers' art
provide for the unique interests of individual pupils and groups of pupils
give guidance for and encouragement to leisure hours of recreational reading so that lifetime habits of reading develop.[36]

Literature is also described as contributing to other parts of the curriculum as well as to children's personal development; it is useful in the education of "exceptional" children. Examples of specific pieces of literature are given as they seem appropriate in each of the curriculum areas about which recommendations are made.

Writing about children's literary heritage, Smith focuses attention on the question of which books should be included in a literature program in the elementary school. The problem is the need to find "a happy medium between forcing specific classics upon all children in common and failing to acquaint them at the appropriate time with those books of imaginative and high literary quality which give insight into basic human values and have become the common heritage of the world's children." Another factor recommended in content selection is "the important relationship between skill in reading and ability to enjoy literary classics." The lists of books presented are expected to guide elementary schools in the development of literature programs. The books are organized under the headings of Aesop's Fables, American Folk Tales, Hans Andersen, The Arabian Nights, English Folk and Fairy Tales, German Folk and Fairy Tales, Norwegian Folk and Fairy Tales, Tales from Many Lands and Times, Gods and Heroes, The Heritage of Poetry, Mother Goose, and Modern Classics. Suggested grade levels, usually with a range of at least three or four grades, are given with each specific title under each of the major categories.[37]

[36] Edith V. Walker, "What Is the Role of Children's Literature in the Elementary School?" in "Children's Literature – Old and New," p. 460.

[37] Dora V. Smith, "The Children's Literary Heritage," *Elementary English*, 41 (November 1964), 715-723.

Literature teaching practices in the elementary school are described and recommended in an article, "What Are Some Meaningful Experiences with Literature?" Reading aloud is suggested as "the most simple and obvious way of introducing to children the best in literature." The recommendation is not only for reading aloud but for reading aloud only the best literature. Criteria are given for the teacher to use when selecting books to be read aloud. A time for hearing stories or poetry should be set aside each day, and children should know about and expect the listening activity. The values of storytelling are outlined, and standards for storytelling are recommended. Literature readers are considered useful in promoting independent reading and oral discussion and for developing creativity. The authors emphasize that they should be used only as introduction to literature; the teacher is responsible for inspiring the children to read the entire book from which the excerpt was taken. Concerning poetry, it is recommended that the "teacher should help children to enjoy poetry, not to analyze it" and should always read poetry to them before they read it themselves. In discussion of ways in which children may share reading experiences, the authors recommend that the "chore" of book reporting should be made as pleasant as possible. Specific examples are given to demonstrate that reporting can be an enjoyable, purposeful activity.[38]

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY

Curriculum guides and courses of study from states or individual school districts deal with teaching literature in the elementary school in a variety of ways. Literature usually is considered a part of the reading curriculum or a part of the language arts program. In some instances literature is included in a general way in both the reading and the language arts guides from the same school system. Literature is often recommended in connection with other curriculum areas. Generally, the curriculum guides indicate an intent to include literature in the elementary school but are less specific in explaining what

[38]Yvette Schmitt and Sister Mary Nora, "What Are Some Meaningful Experiences with Literature?" in "Children's Literature – Old and New," pp. 500-510, 515.

literature is or when it will be included in the school program. Book lists and recommended bibliographies are commonly included in curriculum guides. In the guides which recommend specific literary selections, questions are often suggested for the teacher to use when teaching each selection.

A review of the standards for school libraries reveals that libraries seldom undertake to teach literature. In this regard, it is significant to note that the objectives for school libraries are stated for the library, not for the school librarian. With the current increase in school libraries, how can the functions of the librarian and the classroom teacher be coordinated to accomplish the goals of teaching literature? Does the selection of books for the school library reflect specific curriculum concerns at the expense of selection of books for personal reading? What is the role of the school library in teaching literature?

The amount of literature material with which the teacher and students may work is usually limited to a small fraction of the total reading or language arts text. However, there is likely to be a list of related reading materials, usually library books, suggested for further reading. Some reading and language texts are claimed to be superior on the basis of using literary material, but the teacher usually is directed to teach reading skills with the material and to relate the literature to skill-oriented objectives. Some reading series recommend one book for each grade level in which the material is mainly a body of literary selections and for which no skill development is intended. The topic of book reports is one which is frequently correlated with language arts because speaking, writing, and listening are functionally involved. If time for reading the book is not provided, the book report could become the important goal rather than the reading of the book.

Texts which recommend special emphasis on accurate reading and detailed knowledge of literary selections fail to show how those achievements are related to or predict interest or taste in reading. Can the avid reader be predicted by his success in studying language or composition? When texts of picture books are reproduced in children's texts, what is the effect of not having the illustrations which were in the original books? Are the lists of recommended books found in teacher's guides used to guide personal reading?

Textbooks probably do influence content and methods in the

elementary school curriculum. Can materials for teaching literature be tested experimentally before major decisions are made about using the materials with large populations of children? When reading or language texts give some attention to literature or topics directly related to literature, do the teachers using the texts consider that attention to be a total literature program?

Professional texts in reading, language arts, and children's literature include methods of teaching literature with various emphases. Texts for reading methods are likely to discuss interests and tastes as those factors influence selection of materials. Book reports and poetry are frequently considered in texts for language arts methods. Teachers and student teachers may have in their professional reading a view of a variety of approaches to teaching literature in the elementary schools. Is the college faculty responsible for teaching courses in children's literature aware of the emphasis placed on teaching literature in the professional reading assigned to students in other areas of the language arts? Is it possible for a teacher or prospective teacher to assume that assigning book reports and reading poetry to the class is a total literature program? Does the preparation of the teacher make any difference in the teacher's attitude toward teaching literature?

The preparation of teachers in the area of teaching literature in the elementary school is not clearly defined or described. Course work in children's literature is recommended as a part of programs leading to certification for elementary school teaching. Course work in teaching reading or teaching language arts may involve work with children's literature. The study of literature and the study of language may be a part of the curriculum in teacher education programs. Literature is considered in both the academic and the professional preparation of teachers.

The opinions and recommendations of specialists should be considered in terms of their application to teaching literature and to stimulating research and study about teaching literature. How can a classroom teacher assess or evaluate a child's unconscious awareness of the artistic elements of literature? What does an elementary school teacher need to know about children's literature in order to achieve a balanced program? Can a prescribed set of literature selections accommodate the variety and range of differences within and between classrooms

throughout the country? If close reading of certain selections is to be accompanied by wide independent reading, how much provision must be made for time for students to read independently?

The varied and elusive qualities which characterize the teaching of literature in the elementary school are reflected in recommendations for literature programs. It is agreed that it is important to have literature included in the elementary school curriculum. What evidence do historic and current research and development offer to guide and influence the teaching of literature in the elementary school?

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The search for knowledge and the application of that knowledge to practices in teaching literature in the elementary school have been meager and difficult to define. Possibly the vagueness of existing programs has contributed to that condition. It is also possible that, with the sophisticated and refined statistical treatments currently available, work with affective responses and content analyses has not been encouraged or approved. It is difficult to assign a mathematical score to a six-year-old's response to the story of Mike Mulligan.

REVIEWS OF SELECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

Although there are limitations in research studies in children's literature in both quantity and quality, contributions have been made toward improving literature programs in the elementary school. A review of studies and projects has relevance to the description of the state of the art of teaching literature in the elementary school to the extent that the research and development influence practice or suggest and encourage further study. A selected group of research reports and curriculum projects will be reviewed. In the summary, observations will be made about the studies and projects, and implications will be drawn for teaching literature and for continued research.

Status of Research in Teaching Literature in the Elementary School

Huus reports a "dearth of objective data" about developing tastes in literature in the elementary grades. In a survey of research she concluded that there had been "considerable interest" in the topic in the twenties and early thirties but only a few studies since that time.[1]

[1]Helen Huus, "Developing Tastes in Literature in the Elementary Grades: Part I," *Elementary English*, 39 (December 1962), 780-789.

Needed research in the teaching of English was the topic for discussion in conferences held in 1963 and reported by Russell. Among other conclusions about research in English, it was reported that teachers in NCTE's Elementary Section "are aware of considerable research on the skills of speaking, reading, spelling, and handwriting, fewer research findings in composition and listening, and fewer still in the teaching of literature."[2]

A committee of the NCTE Research Foundation was named "to plan and conduct a conference on research in teaching literature." Compared with research in composition and language, little is being done in teaching literature. The group concluded that there is a "need for instruments to measure growth in literary taste and appreciation at all levels." Based on that conclusion, the decision was made to initiate a project to create a test which would indicate the reactions to literature of children in third through sixth grade. It was recognized that no real attempt has been made to prove that a standardized test measuring children's literary taste and appreciation in the upper elementary school grades is or is not a possibility. It was hoped that, in the process of answering the questions about the test, other pertinent questions would be answered:

> What is good literature?
> What is there to be sensitive to in good literature?
> Do teachers know what good literature is and how to lead those they teach to an awareness of it?
> What are the variables that operate in an individual's response to literature?[3]

The committee expressed the opinion that, if answers to those questions can be found, the "teaching of literature will be more intelligent."

A review of the research on the teaching of literature during the period of April 1964 to April 1967 revealed that, although research contributions were still comparatively light, the number of studies attempting to analyze students' responses and to measure the effects of instruction had increased. Instead of more ambitious investigations of teaching methods, it was

[2]David H. Russell, "Recent Research Conferences," *Elementary English,* 40 (November 1963), 768.

[3]Paul Farmer, "Conference on Research in Teaching Literature," *Elementary English,* 40 (November 1963), 765.

recommended that basic questions should be asked: What are students reading? Where do they get their books? How much time is given to literature instruction?[4]

Interests and Tastes

In 1921 Dunn reported a study of the interests of first, second, and third grade children in primary reading materials. Thirty-one selections from primary reading materials were arranged so that elements of interest could be studied. Pairs of selections were read to children, and, immediately after hearing the selections, the children were asked to vote for their favorite. The unit of measurement was a class vote rather than an individual vote. For the entire group of children, surprise and plot were the most significant interest factors. For the boys, animal-ness and surprise were equally interesting. Child-ness and familiar experience had equal weight with surprise in interest for girls. Dunn reported that humor, except that of a very broad type, is repellent and more so to boys than to girls.[5]

Waples used several methods to find relationships between interests and actual reading. He reported that the conditions affecting reading satisfaction are related to interests or preferences and the nature, readability, and accessibility of the literature. He concluded that what people actually do read is not the same as what they would read if all the influencing conditions were satisfactory. Accessibility was reported to be the most important influence on reading.[6]

In a study (in 1921) of reading interest of children between the ages of nine and eighteen, Jordan used a questionnaire. The children were asked to name their five favorite books and their three favorite magazines. Responses from 3598 individuals were studied. Choices of boys were compared with those of girls, and Jordan concluded that the greatest sex differences in choices of reading materials were at ages twelve and thirteen. There were marked differences in boys' and girls' choices of

[4]Margaret Early and Norine Odland, "Literature in the Elementary and Secondary Schools," *Review of Educational Research*, 37 (April 1967), 178-185.

[5]Fannie Wyche Dunn, *Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material*, Contributions to Education, No. 113 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921).

[6]Douglas Waples, "On Developing Taste in Reading," *Harvard Educational Review*, 9 (October 1939), 413-423.

magazines as well as of books. Jordan also studied children's book selection and book withdrawal in eight public libraries in and around New York City. He reported fewer different books named by girls than by boys, as well as an almost complete separation of choices between boys and girls. The boys were interested in reading books described as dealing with mastery, fighting, sensory life for its own sake, and scornful behavior. The girls were interested in books which dealt with maternal instincts, kindliness, attention to others, and response to approval and scornful behavior.[7]

In a 1924 report, Mackintosh studied children's choices in poetry. One hundred poems were selected from reliable sources and read to children in fifth grade classes. The teacher read a set of ten poems each day. After each poem was read, each child checked his rating of the poem on a six-point scale and told why he liked or disliked the poem. After all ten poems were read, each child checked the five he liked best. The three reasons given most often for liking a poem were its humor, 32 percent; its subject matter, 23.5 percent; miscellaneous reasons, 17.4 percent. The fourth most frequent reason for liking a poem was dialect, with 6.95 percent of the votes. Mackintosh made several conclusions which had implications for teaching literature in the elementary school. She concluded that there was little difference in the poetry interests of boys and girls at the fifth grade level; that more attention should be given to poems with humor and dialect; that a good poem has several characteristics which children like, and it probably contains an appeal to more than one grade level.[8]

Terman and Lima reported a study of reading records kept over a period of two months by two groups of children between the ages of six and sixteen. One group was composed of about 1000 unselected children. The second group consisted of 1000 children with intelligence quotients of 135 or higher on the Stanford-Binet intelligence test. Individual reading records showed great differences within both groups in amount of reading. The gifted children read more than did the average children in the unselected group. The types of books read by

[7] Arthur M. Jordan, *Children's Interests in Reading*, Contributions to Education, No. 107 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921).

[8] Helen K. Mackintosh, "A Study of Children's Choices in Poetry," *Elementary English Review*, 1 (May 1924), 89.

the gifted group were judged to be of better average quality than the books read by the control group. There were few differences in reading interests observed between boys and girls at the ages of six and seven; however, by the age of nine, differences in interests began to appear and continued throughout the age groups studied. The girls reported that 30 percent of the books they had read recently were books they had already read, the boys only 18 percent. In one part of the Terman and Lima study, the choices of children in grades one to eight were studied. Among the twenty favorite choices of the girls only four books also appeared on the boys' list of favorites. Terman and Lima concluded that the four books were similar in characteristics to the other books on the boys' list. The implication seemed to be that girls would read boys' books but the reverse would probably not happen often.[9]

Fictitious titles were used by Thorndike to study the reading interests of children. Intelligence, age, and sex were used to establish comparison groups. Bright children were found to be most like a group of mentally slower children who were two or three years older than they were. Sex was more important than either age or intelligence level in determining reading interests. Both boys and girls liked mystery stories, animal stories, and milder adventure stories. Among those topics some titles had high appeal for girls and low appeal for boys, and vice versa. The greatest changes reported about the age groups were decreases in interest scores with increasing age. Titles which showed decreasing appeal with age included elements of magic, child characters or heroes, personified animals, and remote and unreal adventures. For boys of all ages, crime and criminals held high interest; for girls of all ages, romance or a romantic interest held high interest.[10]

School records, reading autobiographies, observations of children in their English classes and in the school library, and questionnaires about reading interests were collected and analyzed by Wollner in a study of eighth grade students' voluntary reading. He studied a group of high ability and socio

[9]Lewis Terman and Margaret Lima, *Children's Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* (New York: D. Appleton, 1931).

[10]Robert L. Thorndike, *A Comparative Study of Children's Reading Interests Based on a Fictitious Annotated Titles Questionnaire* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941).

economic level. Reading was high among the fifteen leisure-time activities the students were asked to rank in terms of their preferences. An average of 6.9 hours each week was reported for recreational reading. Wollner concluded that children with good experiences in early reading had favorable attitudes toward reading and did much reading. From reading the autobiographies and from individual interviews, Wollner concluded that children considered reading an important and desirable activity. The relationship between reading and other leisure-time activities was not a clear one, and further study seemed to be indicated.[11]

Characteristics of children's favorite books were reported by Rankin. She based her findings on the circulation of fiction from eight libraries over a year's time. The lists of books with the greatest circulation from each of the eight libraries were compared, and ten books were found on the lists of five or more libraries. Among the factors which Rankin found the most popular books have in common were titles indicating content and settings familiar to American children. In the six sea stories in the group, the hero was an American boy. Rankin also concluded that girls drew a large share of the top thirty-five books from the libraries. In her study of the circulation of Newbery Award-winning books, she concluded that only once had the committee which selects the Newbery Award chosen a book which was popular with children. It also was concluded that the two groups of books studied (Newbery winners and high-circulation books) were different in format, theme, story setting, principal characters, style of writing, and readability.[12]

A study by Norvell, using three approaches, was based on opinions expressed by more than 23,000 children enrolled in grades three through nine. Under one approach, the children reacted to selections they had studied and discussed in class. In a second approach, children were asked to give reactions to selections they had read independently. The third approach was that of asking for reactions to selections which the teacher had read to the class. In each of the approaches the children were

[11]Mary Hayden Bowen Wollner, *Children's Voluntary Reading as an Expression of Individuality,* Contributions to Education, No. 944 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949).

[12]Marie Rankin, *Children's Interests in Library Books of Fiction,* Contributions to Education, No. 906 (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944).

asked to rate the selection on a three-point scale – very interesting, fairly interesting, or uninteresting. The selections rated included both prose and poetry. An interest score for a selection was computed by adding the number of "very interesting" responses to one-half the number of "fairly interesting" responses and dividing by the total number of responses for the selection. Among the many findings reported by Norvell was the fact that the ratings of children were different from the ratings of "experts" for those same selections. The children were not giving high ratings to the selections which the experts were recommending in books about children's literature.[13]

Peltola studied the responses of 3,187 children in grades four and six who were asked to name their favorite book characters. The characters named were represented in 963 different trade books or series. When these titles were studied, it was discovered that fourth grade students named significantly more recommended books that did sixth grade students. Realistic stories were chosen more often than make-believe stories. Those children who chose "not recommended" series books tended to be higher in reading achievement than children who named characters from "recommended" books. Fourth grade boys showed more individuality in the choice of a favorite book than did fourth grade girls. In the sixth grade, there was no difference in the number of boys and girls who chose one of the books mentioned most frequently by their sex, but more boys than girls chose a book which no one else in their group chose. A test of knowledge about the books named most frequently by each grade and sex group was constructed and administered to a sample group. The books known by large percentages of children in the sample group were easy books, books from which dramatic presentations have been made, and books which were named frequently by children in both grades four and six. Some children who had not read the books could answer questions about them because of motion pictures, television presentations, or class discussions.[14]

In another study of children's book choices, Peltola presented

[13]George W. Norvell, *What Boys and Girls Like to Read* (Morristown, N. J.: Silver Burdett, 1958).

[14]Bette J. Peltola, "A Study of the Indicated Literary Choices and Measured Literary Knowledge of Fourth and Sixth Grade Boys and Girls," doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1965).

192 first grade children with four pairs of books and asked them to select from each pair one that they would like to read. Sixteen books had been designated as prize books by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and sixteen books were from the catalog *3300 Best Books for Children*[15] but not AIGA prize books. All of the latter books were about animals, and all had been published during the period of time from which the prize books had been selected. The "Best Books" were chosen a significantly greater number of times than were the AIGA prize books. It was concluded that six-year-olds respond to something other than the graphic qualities which cause adults to recognize the books.[16]

The sharing period was used by Byers for recording comments made by 1860 first grade students. An analysis of these responses was interpreted to indicate interests. The ten major topics reported in rank order were science and nature, possessions, personal experiences, family and home activities, outdoor recreation activities, books, clothing, events concerning friends and community, moving pictures and television, and music and recordings. The science interests were mainly in the category of "living things," which included pets and domestic animals, birds, poultry, fish, sea-life, plants, reptiles, wild animals, insects, and amphibians. The conclusion was drawn that children are most interested in their immediate environment and especially in living things in their environment. Implications were presented for curriculum content and for book selection which would recognize interests.[17]

Children in the primary grades expressed their preferences in poetry in a study by Nelson that compared poems from a 1928 textbook with those from contemporary sources. Poems chosen most often included those with elements of action, narration, near-nonsense, child experience, and repetition. The investigator concluded there was great variability in children's choices because no poem received more than half the children's votes and every poem was chosen at least once.[18]

[15] *3300 Best Books for Children,* 1962 ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1962).

[16] Bette J. Peltola, "A Study of Children's Book Choices," *Elementary English,* 40 (November 1963), 690-695, 702.

[17] Loretta Byers, "Pupils' Interests and the Content of Primary Reading Texts," *Reading Teacher,* 17 (January 1964), 227-233.

[18] Richard C. Nelson, "Children's Poetry Preferences," *Elementary English,* 43 (March 1966), 247-251.

Content Analysis

Six themes recurrent in children's literature (fiction) published in the United States from 1850 to 1964 were identified by Shaw as Search for Values, Problems of Growing Up, Travel and Understanding People in Foreign Lands, Lives of Heroes, Fun and Fairy Tales, and The Urge to Know. The popularity of each theme varied in different periods in history, and some themes were popular throughout the period studied. The conclusion was reached that, for the period from 1850 to 1964, "the social, economic, and political thought of America" has been reflected in the books written for its children.[19]

Homze examined the content of children's books. She gave special attention to differences between realistic fiction published between 1920 and 1940 and from 1945 to 1960. In contemporary children's books, children are the main characters, and the adult is given less attention. The settings in children's books are more often urban if the books were published in the latter of the two periods studied.[20]

All available versions of three children's classics were the subject of a study by Stein. For *Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island,* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* a systematic examination of the original versions, the adaptations, and the abridgements was made and reported. Illustration and format were considered as well as text. Stein concluded that the versions using word lists or simplified vocabularies tend to use the story as a tool for teaching reading skills rather than as communication between an author and his reader. Many of the original books are presented attractively and readably for children, and it is a waste of money to buy any of the abridged versions.[21]

Burris evaluated fifty-four children's fiction books published between 1935 and 1964 with Japanese settings for accuracy in portraying people and customs. The investigator concluded that

[19]Jean Duncan Shaw, "Children's Fiction and American History," *Elementary English,* 45 (January 1968), 94.

[20]Alma Homze, "Interpersonal Relations in Children's Literature, 1920-1960," *Elementary English,* 43 (January 1966), 26-28, 52.

[21]Ruth Stein, "The ABC's of Children's Classics: Adapted, Bowdlerized, and Condensed," master's thesis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1965).

authors can present, even at the elementary level, an accurate picture of children in another country. The study did reveal a difference between books and defended the recommendation that books should be considered individually and read carefully when selections are being made.[22]

Teacher Preparation

The English Teacher Preparation Study presents six major guidelines. Guideline III recommends that "The teacher of English at any level should have an understanding and appreciation of a wide body of literature." Related to Guideline III, recommendations are made for general education and for professional education:

> A. His undergraduate program should have prepared him to read for his own enjoyment, to gain insight into himself and the world around him, and to understand and appreciate how writers order experience. . .
> B. He should have studied literature systematically. . . .
> C. He should have acquired critical and scholarly tools. . . .
> D. He should know literary works appropriate for the level at which he teaches.
> 1. The elementary school teacher should know a wide body of children's literature.
> 2. The secondary school teacher of English should know a wide body of literature for adolescents.
> E. He should have studied and practiced the strategies of teaching literature to students who have a wide range and variety of individual and group differences. . . .[23]

A committee of the National Council of Teachers of English on teaching children's literature in colleges and universities conducted a survey on both the teacher and the teaching of children's literature. The 573 respondents reported that the course in children's literature was "taught in more than ten different departments, but most often it was taught in Elementary Education, English, [or] Library Science." The majority of the responses were from individuals teaching a course

[22]Miriam Burris, "Japan in Children's Fiction," *Elementary English*, 43 (January 1966), 29-38.

[23]"English Teacher Preparation Study," *Elementary English*, 44 (October 1967), 646-647.

designed for teachers in kindergarten through grade six. About 50 percent "of the population reported the minimum number of children's books read for the course to be between 21 and 60." The five content areas given greatest emphasis in the children's literature courses were criteria of good children's literature, children's reading interests and tastes, poetry, illustrations in children's books, and picture books. A variety of materials and techniques were used by teachers of children's literature.[24]

Some aspects of the preparation of the elementary school teacher are reported in *The National Interest and the Teaching of English.* In a survey for which 569 valid responses were considered, 73 percent of the programs for preparing elementary teachers required a course in children's literature. The children's literature course was offered in the English department by 37.4 percent of the responding schools and in the department of education by almost as many. Only 7.5 percent offered the course in library schools.[25]

In *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English,* the topic "Courses or Conferences on Children's Literature" was reported to be of great interest and value to 60 percent of the elementary school teachers who responded to a survey. Primary grade teachers showed greater interest than did upper grade teachers, and teachers with more experience showed somewhat more interest than did those with less experience.[26]

In a study conducted for the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, Chase used a questionnaire concerning preparation of the elementary school teacher in language arts. A sample of eighty colleges was selected; all were multi-purpose institutions with an enrollment totaling over 5000, and all offered curricula for the preparation of elementary teachers. Responses were

[24]Elliott D. Landau (ed.), *Teaching Children's Literature in Colleges and Universities* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968).

[25]Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1961), p. 58.

[26]Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964), p. 120.

received from 77 percent of the sample. Ninety-five percent of the respondents reported that a course in methods of teaching reading was required, 85 percent reported that one in methods of teaching English was required, and 92 percent reported the requirement of a course in literature for children.[27]

The *Source Book on English Institutes for Elementary Teachers* has a section dealing with suggestions for the study of literature by elementary teachers with specific references to planning elementary institutes. Lack of attention to teaching literature in the elementary school is cited: "Clearly the elementary sequence in literature requires attention."[28] Different ways are suggested for combining the dual concerns of reviewing literature for children and of learning approaches to analysis.

Curriculum Development

Teaching literature in the elementary school is referred to in a number of the curriculum guides reviewed and recommended by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. Six guides for the elementary school were reviewed in 1968, none of which was specifically concerned with literature, although each guide did include some aspect of literature study. Thirteen guides for some level of the elementary school were reviewed for the period of 1965-1967; among those both specific and general treatment of teaching literature was reported.[29]

In an *Elementary English* article, after a review of over one hundred language arts curriculum guides, an analysis was made of forty-five. The guides, usually developed by teachers, were organized in a variety of patterns, and the general goal was improvement in language use. In the forty-five guides studied, "the general area of language arts" was treated in thirty-one,

[27]Naomi C. Chase, speech given to Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, Minneapolis, April 27, 1963.

[28]Modern Language Association and National Council of Teachers of English, *Source Book on English Institutes for Elementary Teachers* (Champaign, Ill.: Modern Language Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 100.

[29]William J. Scannell (ed.), *Annotated List of Recommended Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Guides in English* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English/Educational Resources Information Center, 1968).

reading was the central subject in eight, and the others were even more limited or special. Most guides contained topics to be included in instructional programs. The receptive aspects of the language process were given less emphasis and were usually called listening, reading, or observing. Many of the language arts guides explained that the school system had a separate guide for reading, and in those instances reading was only mentioned in the general guide. In many guides, some areas of the language arts were reported to be "treated superficially or not at all." Those areas concerned with development of literary appreciation and "the establishment of attitudes and values" received very little attention. Even when they were mentioned, little attention was given to procedures for developing or evaluating appreciation, attitudes, or values. Prose and poetry as forms of literature were mentioned in a few of the bulletins, but there were few recommendations for content or teaching technique.[30]

The Nebraska Curriculum Development Center has published the results of work done by Nebraska classroom teachers as well as scholars from Nebraska and other parts of the country.[31] The Nebraska English curriculum for the elementary school is divided into units. The central feature in each unit is literature, often literature read aloud. Accompanying the work in literature is work in language and composition. The description of the materials makes it clear that the curriculum in English should not be confused with a reading program. The sequence of literary works endeavors to show a transition from the "mythic" and anthropomorphic to the realistic and the analytic. The materials for the elementary program consist of seventy specific units for the various grade levels and two packets of supplementary materials. Sixty-nine of the units are divided into what the guide calls "pseudo-genres," and one unit, for the sixth grade, is centered on the poetry of Robert Frost.

Recommended procedures in the Nebraska Curriculum are, for the main part, oral reading followed by discussion and other

[30]Daisy M. Jones, "Curriculum Development in Elementary Language Arts: Current Trends and Issues," *Elementary English,* 41 (February 1964), 138-144, 166.

[31]Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, "A Curriculum for English: Poetry for the Elementary Grades" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

types of analysis. Composition exercises, language explorations, and other activities are expected to grow directly out of the literature presentations. The book which is discussed and about which questions are asked is called the core book. The core book is to be only the beginning of the reading of literature, and an extensive bibliography is included.

Background information for the teacher introduces each unit. Procedures are suggested, of which some are general and some are specific instructions. Objectives are listed and activities are suggested for several poems. The story "The Little Red Hen" is taught in the first unit for grade one. The first suggested question after the second reading of the story is "Why did the Little Red Hen want to plant the wheat?" followed by nine other questions, the last of which is "Was it wrong of the Little Red Hen not to share her bread?" Both oral and written composition activities are suggested to follow discussion of the story. For the "Little Red Hen" the suggested activity is writing a story about another animal that had to do something by himself. Children are directed to use the technique of repetition in the story they write.

In the Nebraska English curriculum for grade six, the pattern used in previous grades is followed with increasing complexity. In the unit "Fanciful Tales" the book *A Wrinkle in Time* is to be read to the class. After each chapter, questions are to be asked. A sample of the questions asked after reading Chapter I include "Did Meg and Charles Wallace's parents understand them? How do you know? Can you give some specific examples?" The first question after Chapter III is "What is the name of Cape Canaveral now? Why was it changed?" The last question for Chapter XI is "Can you explain love?" Composition activities and language explorations follow the discussion sessions.

The Wisconsin English Language Arts Curriculum Project was prepared by invited committees, one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level. "Teaching Literature in Wisconsin," a part of the project, is a sequential growth curriculum in experiences with literature from kindergarten through grade twelve.[32]

[32]Wisconsin English Language Arts Curriculum Project, "Teaching Literature in Wisconsin" (Madison: Department of Public Instruction, 1965).

The curriculum for kindergarten through sixth grade is based on the idea that the teacher of the self-contained elementary classroom is responsible for teaching the humanities as well as the social and physical sciences. From the characteristics of the humanist, certain implications for the teacher of literature emerge. The quality of the literature and the manner in which it is presented are important in teaching literature in the elementary school. Amounts of time cannot be given for any particular work or literature unit because the time necessary for response to literature will vary according to uncontrollable and unpredictable factors. The teacher should encourage expressions of opinions about literature and respect students' views when these are expressed.

The reasons for teaching literature are presented, and the characteristics of a good literature program are as follows:

> It is sequential.
> It is comprehensive.
> It is adjusted to levels of ability.
> It is balanced between instruction and encouragement of individual free reading.
> It makes effective use of supplementary materials.
> It recognizes the new as well as the old.
> It measures the success of instruction by students' ability to deal with literature.[33]

The Wisconsin curriculum suggests a division of units into three parts. First, the teacher reads stories to children, an activity usually found in the early primary grades. A second type of activity is reading literature under the teacher's direction followed by discussion, an activity more likely to be used in grades four to six. The third type of activity is individual free reading beginning in the first grade and increasing in amount and maturity of selection throughout the elementary school years.

The basic list of literary materials for kindergarten through grade three is arranged by widening awareness. Following the basic list, a collateral reading list is provided for the teacher to use in guiding children's reading. The approaches suggested for beginning literary awareness include storytelling, reading aloud of both prose and poetry, records, films and filmstrips, radio

[33] *Ibid.*

and television programs, and resource people. Illustrative lessons are included for each grade level and for a variety of objectives.

Teaching literature in grades four through six is recommended as an extension of the objectives and approaches begun in the primary grades. Again, a basic list and a collateral list are provided for the teacher. The illustrative lessons are based on the idea of sequential and cumulative development. Fantasy and Folklore, Myths and Legends, Poetry, Biography, and Fiction are units for grades four through six.

Evaluation should be carried out by the teacher, who is expected to refer to the goals proposed for the literature program. Teacher observation is recommended over formal testing.

Teaching Practices

Norvell reported a study in which the traditional program of teaching literature was compared with a program which involved much free reading. In the traditional program, a few literary selections were studied intensively and the question-and-answer approach was the teaching method used. In the experimental method there was some class study of selections similar to those studied in the traditional program, but less time was spent studying them. Twenty-eight classes of high school students were involved in the study. Findings showed that the group taught with the experimental method enjoyed reading more and read more outside of class. The greatest differences were observed for brighter students. The slow pupils did equally well in both methods.[34]

Reading consultants in one school system evaluated book report practices for grades two through seven. Teachers responded to a questionnaire about frequency and use of book reports in their classes. For grades two and three, the majority of teachers did not require a certain number of book reports, nor did they require any written reports. Many used means of reporting about books other than writing or formal talks. For grades four to six, the number of reports required ranged from none to twenty-five, written reports were used by some teachers, and many teachers used means other than written reports. The

[34]George W. Norvell, "Wide Individual Reading Compared with the Traditional Plan of Studying Literature," *School Review*, 49 (October 1941), 603-613.

article suggests what should be expected in book reports from children on different levels and offers some guidelines. The authors discourage the use of rigid rules for book reports.[35]

One investigator conducted a study in her home diocese to determine the effectiveness of literature in the school system, grades five through eight. The population included 1000 children and 40 teachers. Assessments were made of student attitudes toward literature and teacher attitudes toward certain practices in the teaching of literature. Among the students, the girls expressed a more positive attitude toward literature than did the boys, and the fifth grade students showed a more positive attitude toward literature than did the eighth grade students. Teachers rated higher than the children in attitude toward literature, and the correlation between teacher attitude and pupil attitude was negligible. The teachers' report of the practices they should carry out and that of what they *were* doing were not the same. In the middle grades, 91.68 percent of the teachers thought they should read to the children, but comparatively few did so. In grade eight, 66.67 percent expressed the attitude that they should read to the students, but very few did so. From the entire group of 40 teacher, more than half (22) had not read any children's books which were new to them during the preceding year, while 91.67 percent of the total number of teachers expressed the opinion that they should read children's books. The average number of children's books read that year by the individual teachers was *one.* Most of the teachers hoped for one reader which would furnish prose and poetry enabling them to teach elementary literature. The researcher concluded that "there is much to be desired in the teaching of appreciation of children's literature at the elementary level."[36]

Teaching practices were studied by Cohen, who attempted to improve motivation for those students who could not read well by reading literature to the children. "Through strengthening verbal readiness and heightening motivation to read," attempts

[35]Kathryn J. Martin, C. G. Brown, Jr., and Norman C. Hoffman, "Book Reports: Practices and Recommendations," *Elementary English,* 44 (October 1967), 609-612.

[36]Sister M. Victoria Eisenman, O.S.B., "The Situation in Literature," *Elementary English,* 42 (October 1965), 644-645.

were made to increase actual achievement in reading of children with culturally limited backgrounds who tend to fall behind in reading and therefore in academic achievement. The populations came from seven elementary schools in New York City in which there was "academic retardation, low socioeconomic population, and high percentage of ethnic and racial minorities." For the pretests of the experiment there were twenty second grade classes with 580 students. For the posttests there were 285 students, 130 from the control group and 155 from the experimental group. The experimental variable was the story reading, introduced and maintained by the classroom teachers. All classes used a basal reader. For the story reading, fifty books were given to the teacher to be read. Some of the books were left out in the room, and others were put away. The books were all considered good stories of "here and now" realism. Along with other selection criteria, the stories were chosen on the basis of their possibilities for the reader's "emotional identification" with their characters. A manual of activities and story reading techniques was given to each teacher in the experimental group along with a schedule for reading the books. In the control groups the teachers might read a story occasionally, but no plan or schedule was set up. The Metropolitan Reading Achievement tests and a free association vocabulary test were used. The experimental group showed a significantly greater increase when compared with the control group in vocabulary, word knowledge, and reading comprehension and a statistically significant increase in "quality of vocabulary." There were no significant ability differences between experimental and control groups in word discrimination. The researcher interpreted the findings to mean that it is important to read to children as a precursor to success in learning to read, especially for socially disadvantaged children.[37]

Teaching literature often includes methods for motivation and interpretation. Cianciolo reported results of visits to schools and libraries during which motivational activities were observed and discussed. Among the activities observed and recommended

[37]Dorothy H. Cohen, "The Effect of Literature on Vocabulary and Reading Achievement," *Elementary English*, 45 (February 1968), 209-213, 217.

were television production, book talks, reading aloud and story-telling, book clubs, creative dramatics, graphic art interpretations, and games and puzzles. Guidelines were suggested for "adult-directed motivating activities."

> Pupil initiative should be developed. . . .
> Learning activity should develop acceptable habits, attitudes, and ideals. . . .
> Each learning activity should contribute to the achieving of some worthwhile purpose.[38]

A scale for the purpose of evaluating reading programs was devised by Rauch. The scheme for evaluation was a series of questions which could be answered "yes" or "no." There was no rating scale with numerical values. One of the questions was related to teaching literature: "Are the following components of a good reading program emphasized?"

1. Word Recognition Skills
2. Comprehension Skills
3. Study Skills
4. Planned Literature Program
5. Recreational Reading[39]

Other questions, such as those dealing with materials and libraries, might be considered related to literature programs.

Powell conducted a study in grades four, five, and six in order to compare the use of classroom libraries and public libraries. He concluded that materials are used more frequently if library books for this purpose are accessible in the classroom.[40]

Responses to Literature

A recent publication by Purves explores the complex problem of classifying the elements of writing about literature. In the introduction to the work, Squire cautions the reader that "the elements of writing about literature are not necessarily identical with the elements of response" to literature. The research report

[38]Patricia Cianciolo, "Motivation and Interpretation in the Literature Program," *Elementary English,* 44 (March 1967), 208.

[39]Sidney J. Rauch, "A Checklist for the Evaluation of Reading Programs," *Reading Teacher,* 21 (March 1968), 519-522.

[40]William R. Powell, "Classroom Libraries: Their Frequency of Use," *Elementary English,* 43 (April 1966), 395-397.

is an elaboration of method to answer the question, What does the understanding of a literary text involve? Recognizing that literature is an inseparable mixture of content and form, an attempt has been made to analyze the content of what is written about literature. The term "elements," as used in the report, is considered neither exhaustive nor taxonomical. The contents of the essay a writer has written about literature would be, if the scheme were used, analyzed according to the elements arranged under four general headings: engagement-involvement, perception, interpretation, and evaluation. Recommendations are made for the system of analysis to be used for research as well as for a point of departure for curriculum experimentation. In spite of its highly structured sound, the approach aims for the reader, whoever he may be, to be flexible in the treatment of a literary work.[41]

Monson investigated children's responses to humor by using four types of questions; one was unstructured and three were forms of multiple choice and alternate response questions. The questions were based on excerpts from recommended children's books reproduced for the study. The children were fifth grade students whose reading scores were above 3.5 grade level. Differences in the responses made by children to structured and unstructured questions were greater for boys than for girls. Boys more frequently judged selections humorous when they were presented in a structured situation. Children in the higher intelligence group judged excerpts to be humorous more often than did children in middle or lower intelligence groups. The evidence suggested that different methods of questioning result in different responses from children.[42]

Papers and discussion related to literature from the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English are reported by Squire.[43] Although reactions were described as "highly individualistic," more unanimity than division was observed. James

[41] Alan C. Purves with Victoria Rippere, *Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968).

[42] Dianne L. Monson, "Children's Responses to Humor in Literature," doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1966).

[43] James R. Squire (ed.), *Response to Literature* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968).

Britton spoke about teaching literature in the elementary school. He expressed the idea "that responses of most adult readers are sharpened . . . if [the responses] are in some measure formulated, so that [the reader is] aware of the nature of the processes that have led to satisfaction"; but this is "not true of children under the age of eleven or so." Children's responses to literature are "lively, discriminating, and complex," but they will not be helped if attempts are made "to formulate those responses." In his description of the elementary school, Britton said there will be talk "about the people and events of literature [but] not about forms, conventions, devices, techniques." He warned that "we should be more afraid of introducing such matters too early than too late." In the matter of analysis, Britton said, "To have children take over from their teachers an analysis of a work of literature which their teachers in turn have taken over from the critics or their English professors – this is not a short cut to literary sophistication; it is a short circuit that destroys the whole system." The problem, says Britton, is not so much what to do with books but making enough books sufficiently accessible for children to read.[44]

Teachers need to recognize individual differences among students but can be guided by the general observation that up to about age eleven the young child responds to literature "directly and unashamedly." At about nine or ten the child begins to develop an "extroverted" outlook; at that age, he is likely to be reading widely and with great speed.[45]

"Modes of approach to literature" were considered important as selection of materials. They were listed as (1) The Individual Child with the Individual Book, (2) Literature as Group Experience, and (3) Presentation of Literary Material Accompanied by Discussion. For this reason, guided reading should not be relegated to out-of-school, "when-you-have-nothing-else-to-do" times. Literature as a group experience includes storytelling, folk songs, films, creative dramatics, role playing, and other group activities. By this approach, "a rich sensitivity to the pleasures of a shared aesthetic experience" can be developed.

[44] James Britton, "Response to Literature," *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

[45] D. W. Harding, "Response to Literature: The Report of the Study Group," *ibid.*, p. 14.

Presentation of literary material may be accompanied by discussion, but this approach is usually reserved for difficult selections. Approaches and emphases vary with the age of the students.[46]

The direct study of literary criticism, literary history, or critical theory does not seem necessary in the elementary schools. "The dryness of schematic analysis of imagery, symbols, myth, structural relations, *et al.*, should be avoided passionately at school and often at college. *It is literature, not literary criticism, which is the subject.*"[47] The teacher, in his education to become a teacher, should be equipped to make the judgments about how much information and which information about the background of the author and historical setting will be useful to the reader.

More questions were asked in *Response to Literature* than answers given about selection of literary works to be included in the curriculum. How much should pupils' interests influence content of curriculum? How much variety and balance should be evident? How much media other than books? Questions were also asked about sequence. Research was considered to be needed for answering questions about selection and sequence of content.

The study of literature in the elementary school was reported *not* to be teaching reading from a basic reader. Study of literature is now "coming into its own" in American schools, in an informal but sequential pattern. Literature is not so unnaturally separated from children's writing.

The teacher should be competent in oral reading because oral reading is necessary for "getting into" a poem or passage. Reading aloud should be for the sake of listening; no comments are necessary.

If we need any single reform, it is to reintroduce *pleasure* into the English period, as one contributor to *Response to Literature* believes. The teacher needs to know the material being taught but not for the purpose of handing it over directly to the students. The good teacher is one who can combine, wisely, scholarly understanding of literature and awareness of children.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 26 (Harding's italics).

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY

Studies of children's reading interests are more numerous than any other type of investigation in the field of children's literature. A variety of methods has been used to assess children's interests. In the earliest study reported in this review (Dunn, 1921), responses were given orally by children in a class setting where there is no way to estimate peer influence. Questionnaires have been used as a means of learning about the reading preferences of children. The validity of the questionnaire depends on the clarity of the questions and the ease with which the respondent is able to write and spell his responses. Recalling ten different poems and making a choice of five favorites is a difficult task for children, and the reliability of the choices might be questioned. Library circulation has limitations as a means for studying interests unless a follow-up study determines whether or not the book is read. Library circulation must also be interpreted within the limitation that individuals who go to the library to withdraw books like to read.

Norvell (1958) concluded that children's choices of interesting books were not the same as adults' choices. No study has demonstrated whether or not adults would agree with children if the task the adults were directed to pursue was agreement with children's ratings.

Most of the interest studies have used some type of category for classifying children's choices. Children's ideas about categories would be worth investigating as a way to learn whether the groupings adults use for books are accepted, recognized, or useful to the boys and girls who read the books.

Differences between the book choices of boys and those of girls are usually shown to begin in the middle grades of the elementary school. Furthermore, there is a tendency for girls' choices to be clustered and for boys' choices to be dispersed over a longer list, a tendency which is contradicted in most book acquisition practices. The books at the top of the list are ordered and reordered, and the girls read more.

Writers of curriculum guides, textbooks, trade books, and professional books for teachers and librarians recognize the importance of satisfying children's interests. Children's choices of favorites, especially in the fifth and sixth grades, continue to be considerably different from the books recommended as the

best literature. Perhaps attention should be focused on somewhat different questions: How does the teacher influence children's choices? Can certain teaching approaches be shown to influence children's choices of books as well as to influence their attitudes toward reading? Will oral reading for enjoyment build interest in a piece of literature different from the interest indicated if the oral reading is followed by detailed questions for which answers are either right or wrong? Is reading guidance which recommends variety and breadth and attempts to discourage a child's reading intensively about one subject really effective guidance? What are the longitudinal reading patterns of enthusiastic and discerning readers?

Are teachers and librarians aware of the content of the books they recommend for children's reading? Content analysis, as seen in some studies which have been reviewed here, demands careful reading and objective, systematic classification. Use of a panel for judging and classifying the books rather than relying on the judgment of one individual might create more confidence in the book lists.

Curriculum guides for teaching literature have been developed for a number of school programs. The value of these guides would be increased if, along with them, some evidence of their effectiveness, limitations, revisions, or additions were appended. For example, for the Wisconsin and Nebraska guides it would be significant to know the extent of the use of the guides in the schools of the respective states, the reaction of teachers to the procedures recommended, the accessibility of the materials recommended for use, and the revisions which writers of the guides suggest. All references should be accurate when curriculum guides give ideas about using books, information about authors and illustrators, content summaries of the books, and questions to be used in discussing selections.

In some guides, the specificity and tone of the directions show a lack of confidence in the teacher's ability to ask questions about a literary selection. The specific questions also contradict the idea that groups of children differ and each child in the group is different from the others in the group. How can one set of questions about a story respect the various backgrounds and experiences of children? Providing lists of specific questions about each selection could be interpreted as indirect approval of the teacher's reading not the story but only the

questions. If some guidance of teachers is considered necessary, suggestions could be made in terms of literary elements or ideas toward which discussions might be directed.

Do study guides make the best possible use of the motivational power of interest rather than beginning with adult-imposed ideas? Are interests of children recognized when teachers direct discussions about prose or poetry? Many of the study guides list questions which would stimulate creative thinking; the responses would necessarily be different according to each individual child's interpretation. Are guides explicit in explaining that there is no "right" answer to the questions and that no score or numerical grade is possible?

When the study of literature is combined with the study of language and composition, certain strengths can be recognized. Students can observe, as models, interesting and well-written pieces of literature. The assumption that children can or need to assimilate into their own writing the level of competency and style which is present in the literature they enjoy needs to be tested. What attitude toward literature is expressed by children who have been assigned to write as a closely related part of their study of prose and poetry? How much voluntary reading is done by children who have been introduced to literature as a means of studying grammar? Would longitudinal studies help to examine the wisdom and effectiveness of using literature to study language and composition?

Teaching practices do not lend themselves to research in the conventional definition of the term. Affective behaviors are difficult to assess, the teacher variable is difficult to deal with, and describing programs presents a problem which limits interpretation when studies are done. A study similar to the one made by Norvell (1941) with high school classes could be carried out in similar fashion in elementary school classes, if "traditional" and "experimental" programs could really be described. The scarcity of "methods" studies in teaching literature may be a credit to the wisdom of the researchers rather than a condition for which apologies must be made.

Teachers' revelations of what they think they should do and what they actually do with literature and books were shown to be drastically different. If teachers think they should read to children but do not read to children, what is the reason? Is time available in the curriculum? Is the value of reading to children

less than the value of the activities which are included?

Some proof seems to exist that, even for children with low ability and low achievement, time spent with literature is positively related to achievement in learning to read. Teaching practices which recommend reading for those who can read and dull drill and oral reading for those who cannot may need to be revised.

Limiting enrichment to those who are already on their way to being rich may be difficult to justify. All children need a chance to hear and enjoy the language of literature. What adjustment in teaching practices will be necessary to provide all children with the opportunity to appreciate literature?

Evaluation of reading programs often includes evaluation of elements related to literature. How do children interpret their reading achievement? Is it limited to skill development, or does progress in reading include appreciation and recreational reading? Can a student in the elementary school be called a "good reader" if he can but does not read?

In studies of the use of the library, more information is needed about the effect of classroom collections which a teacher brings to the classroom from the school library. What is the effect on the use of the library of teaching literature in classrooms? In a study of children's interests (Peltola, 1965), sixth grade students were reported less likely to read recommended books than were fourth grade students. Are elementary school libraries satisfying the reading interests of mature readers in the sixth grade? The 1966 edition of the H. W. Wilson Company's *Children's Catalog* announced that it would no longer list recommended books for grades seven and eight, adding instead a new *Junior High School Catalog.* Are librarians and teachers alert to the reading interests and choices of the more mature students in the elementary school?

The preparation of teachers for teaching literature in the elementary school has been recommended more than it has been studied for the effects of programs and practices. Is the study of children's patterns of growth and development an essential prerequisite to the study of children's literature? Is the variable of the department under which the course in literature is taught an influence on the teacher of literature in the elementary school? What is the attitude of the college student toward children's literature as a course? Is the cur-

riculum value of trade books stressed with little attention to literary value? Student teaching and internship experiences are considered important stages in teacher preparation. What do prospective teachers see in the classroom which influences their teaching of literature? Will a strong background in the study of all types of literature make for better teachers of literature in the elementary school?

Response to literature is the goal of teaching literature in the elementary school. Methods of teaching and evaluating literature in the elementary school will vary according to the way in which the term "response" to literature is interpreted by classroom teachers and other persons influencing the literature curriculum. Is it knowledge about a work? Is it facts about an author's life? Is it a piece of writing produced by the reader after he reads literature? Is the response immediate or slow to show in the behavior of the reader? The possibility for questions about response to literature is limitless; therein lies the basis for defending diversity and variety of approaches to literature.

Are teachers alert to the influences working in the environment when children respond in certain ways to certain stories? There is the possibility that children will decide they do not like something if they realize they must write about it after they say they do like it. It could very well be that children say they like something because it is the nice and agreeable way to act, but, if they must write a sentence or two after they agree, they may have second thoughts about it. Teachers often rely on a chorus of acclaim for a book or a poem. Group reaction may be reliable, but peer influence, especially from a group leader, can give a group response a result different from individual interviews about the same story or poem.

The schemes for analysis of a piece of writing about a literary work as suggested by Purves may appear to be more complicated than can be applicable for the elementary school. Closer study of the system for analysis may reveal possibilities for application. What do children write about their reading? Do journals and reading records stimulate or stifle interest in reading?

The participants in the Dartmouth Seminar assumed that there should and would be literature in the curriculum of the elementary school. The general tone of the reports recommends an informal program, at least until grades five or six. Even in grades five and six, the approach to literature would allow much

oral reading to the students with discussions when appropriate but not to the detriment of enjoyment. Accessibility of books is of paramount importance if children are to have the opportunity to respond to literature.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Few generalizations can be made about the state of the art of teaching literature in the elementary school. There is interest in the subject, but there are more questions than answers about objectives, content, and approaches for teaching literature in kindergarten through grade six.

Four situational descriptions encompass the majority of approaches to teaching literature in the elementary school. It is possible that in any one school or in any one classroom more than one of the approaches may be used with varying emphases:

1. Teaching literature in a designated period of the day with the subject called *literature.* The methods used are similar to those used in secondary schools and colleges, and the students are treated as adults. Relatively little teaching of literature seems to be done with this approach, and when it is used it is likely to be found in the upper grades of the elementary school.
2. School personnel consider the library period to be the literature program by interpreting the reading guidance responsibilities of the librarian as those of teaching literature. The frequency of this situation is difficult to estimate. Recently there has been an increase both in the number of school libraries and in the size of book collections in the libraries. Whether or not increased availability of books has been accompanied by a shift of responsibility from classroom teacher to librarian is not known. Patterns of school organization may affect the situation, especially in those schools which use some system other than self-contained classrooms.
3. The teaching of literature is part of a planned program for which the main objective is enjoyment of literature and continued interest in reading through developing a sensitivity to literary elements as well as to content. The

program recognizes characteristics of children including differences between individuals and between groups of children. Evaluation is based on how much a child reads, on what he reads, and on his attitude toward reading. The teacher and the students know that the literature being read is the main goal of instruction and not a peripheral objective. Teaching literature with this approach is relatively infrequent, highly individual, dependent on the teacher, and likely to be found more in the primary grades than in the upper grades.

4. The most frequent practice is that of including or using literature as a secondary goal in the teaching and learning process. It may be done with reading, language arts, social studies, science, or other areas, but the objectives are only indirectly related to literature. Book reports are given for improving speaking and listening skills, lines of poetry are studied for finding subjects and predicates, or a book is read to make a social studies report. Literature is important for its contribution to all curriculum areas, and no direct teaching of literature is done.

Little evidence exists to support current practices, mainly because current practices are not precisely defined. Foremost among the issues toward which research and development might be directed is the description of current practices. Is it reasonable to attempt to describe practices, or are there characteristics inherent in the subject of literature which limit precise definitions?

Can curriculum guides be made to function effectively for literature teaching? Which staff members should participate in constructing curriculum guides? The literature program is frequently a part of the reading curriculum, and reading specialists often are oriented toward clinical, diagnostic, and remedial teaching practices. Will the literature program receive balanced attention if a clinical approach to reading influences the reading program? Similar possibilities for neglect of literature exist in the various combinations of literature and other language arts. Frequently the recommendation for wide independent reading is made in curriculum guides. When no time is scheduled for individual reading, is the recommendation realistic?

Literature is used with many curriculum areas, and the practice is usually recommended. What is the effect on children's attitudes toward the literary and personal value of reading when the major approach to literature is using it to accomplish objectives in other curriculum areas? In the search for balances, should there be both literature as literature and literature as it enhances and enriches other studies?

Selecting and circulating books which enrich the curriculum is one objective of school libraries. How much is book selection determined by specific curriculum topics? Are the sources of information about children's books being used effectively by classroom teachers in the elementary schools? Which booklists are used? Does the emphasis on content often found in book reviews influence teachers to be concerned about the subject matter of the book without giving appropriate attention to the way the book is written? Do book acquisition policies recognize individual literary interests and tastes as well as curriculum needs? What are effective ways for encouraging cooperation between teachers and librarians?

Teaching practices have been studied, but the variables are difficult to control and results are often inconclusive. Can the results of teaching literature be tested objectively? Would objective evaluation determine the goals of the literature program? Are descriptive reports of teaching practices more likely to improve instruction in the elementary school than are the attempts to conduct experimental studies?

What should be included in the preparation of the teacher of literature? Does the elementary teacher receive his best background for teaching literature in the department of English, school of library science, department of home economics, college of education, or some other department? Does the focus and design of the course depend on the college or department in which the course is offered? Are the teachers who meet the recommended standards different in their success in teaching literature from those who do not meet the recommended standards? What is the most effective inservice education for teaching literature? Countless studies of teaching practices conclude that the teacher makes the difference. If that conclusion is valid for literature in the elementary school, the selection and preparation of the teacher is a crucial determining factor.

The major issues in the teaching of literature in the elementary school relate to the basic questions, Do children read? and, What do they read? Will certain approaches to literature encourage reading? Who is doing the reading? Do materials and methods recognize differences in children's interests, tastes, and abilities? Do students observe a teacher's genuine enthusiasm for literature? Has literature gained a respected place in the school program? When a student evaluates his success in reading, does he include personal reading and appreciation as part of achievement? Which books are children choosing to read? Do teachers read the books the students read? Attention to secondary objectives and peripheral concerns has created confusion in the teaching of literature in the elementary school. Answers to questions about teaching literature to children might best be found if the focus for research and development is placed on the reading children do and on the responses children make to the literature they read.

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